

What Do News Editorials Point to in the Framing of Nigerian National Security? Does Media Contents Project Public Lens or Elites Power Hierarchies?

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ABSTRACT

Growing cases of the role of media in national security tend to suggest that news is reflective of on the spot assessment. Yet, a corpus of literature shows that media influence is highly dominated by elites' power, where media framing projects more of these power and influence. This paper therefore expounds on the extent to which news media editorials are reflective of public concerns or portray more of elites' power. Succinctly, the aim is to explore what media editorials point to in the framing of national security issues. In view of the precarity of insecurity and mounting challenges of Nigeria's national security, it is pertinent to unravel what constantly preoccupies media establishments, mostly, their editorial contents. And what trajectory and path do they tilt towards in the broader mediatization of the nation's national issues occasioned by terrorism, militancy, banditry, kidnapping and other crimes. Overall, the paper provides a clue about how news editorials showcase and often pander to hierarchal power within Nigeria's national security architecture.

Keywords: Editorials; Media framing; National security; Nigeria; Public sphere

INTRODUCTION

The significant impact of editorials in the making of news defines the positional and foundational stance of a news media organization on the most important issues of the day, both domestic and international. An editorial also reinforces the media's watchdog role of holding governments accountable to the people and society. As a consequence, citizens – audience and the state perceive editorials diametrically; with audience perceiving such news menu as a call-to-action on the government, the state, agency or a particular set of institutions to act responsibly. Governments however, tend to view such editorials as oppositional, which is especially the case for incumbent governments. But this raises the question: does the news media editorial often mirror society in ways that reflect the public interest? Therefore, this study explores the extent to which editorials reflect the challenges of national security in Nigeria. It lays out the degree to which news editorial either project elites' power or citizen-centric views of publics across the broad spectrum of society. Addressing these research gaps is capable of unravelling the various curves in the mediatization of national security in Nigeria by the news media.

First, the study put forward the cases of departure between the editorials framing and citizens' concerns about national security. The editorials are placed side by side and rely on Afro barometer's Survey that vividly captures the disgruntle mood of citizens with Nigeria's national security. Here, there is wide gap as the editorials framing tend pander more to elites' symbolism than align with public concerns of citizens over the depraving cases of insecurity and the challenges of national security widely. Though, the editorials framing might highlight

the prevailing crisis of national security, there cannot be said to citizen-centric, instead, they often represent the hierarchies of power within the country's national security structure and architecture. Critically, scholarly literature of media coverage and the role of editorials have been largely focused on issues around media bias and lack of objectivity (Puglisi & Snyder 2015; Groeling 2013; Groseclose & Milyo 2005; Hackett 1984). It does not address the suggestion as to whether the news editorials respond to societal needs or public good, thereby, creating a research puzzle yet to be resolved.

But a cursory look at media platforms signifies a high believability among media organizations of the critical role and impact of editorials on society as a political force and a powerful persuasive tool to keep governments on their toes (Obi *et al* 2023; Ragraio 2022). As Entman (1989) pointed out, media messages and reportage are substantial representations of attitudes held by citizens, as well as reflections of nationalistic and societal outlooks. Given the nature of these representations, should the functions of news editorials be extended in terms of their capacity to illuminate public concerns, pander to elites' symbolism and representation or power hierarchies? These links between society and media contents – editorials by themselves tend to impact each other in ways that underscore the very essence of such correlation. Thus, questions about the news media freedom in the decision-making processes of editorials and the societal contexts they bring to bear stands out as a definitional basis of what shape editorial logics and the prism of agenda-setting at play. Critically, since news and even editorials are representative of society (Entman 1989), what then influence framing of editorials in the coverage of national issues?

Yet, notwithstanding a high turnover of media and journalism research on impact of news (Baden *et al* 2019; Fletcher & Park 2017; Liu *et al* 2013) and the media logics that shape news coverage (Brants & Praag 2017; Altheide 2004), focus on the determinants and influence or the directional contours of editorials remains at the peripheral in research. For instance, Marques and Mont'Alverne (2021) argued that there is a high research gap in the study of news editorials, their impact and worthiness. They further explained that researching on news editorials is very critical considering that it provides an opportunity to understand how editorial decisions are made, crafted, and produced, including the various rules of media and journalistic cultures that influence them. Still, editorials often times are considered to be the core voice of media organization(s) (Le 2010).

However, studies on news editorials in an emerging democracy like Nigeria often concentrate more on language and linguistics features of such news editorials (Malah *et al* 2017; Jegede 2015) than other salient socio-political issues confronting the Nigerian state. And in an age of heightened national security crisis, not much research has covered that area extensively. More critical is the relevance of national security to both a democratic society and a sustainable society within the context of the socio-political underpinnings and what role is expected of the media in such political environment. In early stages, scholars like Almond (1956) argued that because of the gravity of the high stakes associated with national security and public policy, the response of the press and the quality of the media is also critical in shaping public opinion and citizens understanding of issues of national security. Indisputably, the extent to which editorials influence citizens perception of national security is also informed by factors that shape the crafting of such editorials themselves.

Other scholarly works tend to explore the tricky relationship between the media and national security, particularly in respect to the encroachment of civil liberties (McLeod & Shah 2015), or provides partisan cues from incumbent ruling party and opposition party discourses, narratives and partisan rhetoric on national security (Baum & Groeling 2009) or downplaying the surveillance state by media under the shield or cover of national security interest (Wahl-Jorgensen *et al* 2017) among other aspects. Given these divergent areas of media framing, to what extent does editorial framing acts as a signpost of public perception

within the prism of national security? With increasing cases of insecurity in Nigeria occasioned by Boko Haram terrorism, militancy in the Niger-Delta, authoritarianism and democratic recession, this research question has become imminent in order to unearth what lens editorials provide in its focus on national security and the attendant coverage.

Thus, this study employs textual analysis to study Nigerian newspapers editorials' underlying analytical proclivity in the projection of journalistic lens within the confines of Nigerian national security. It explores 8 editorial articles from 4 newspapers to test the discursive (re)alignment of the mediated and journalistic ordinances in communicating the nation's national security. Overall, the research seeks to uncover the following research puzzles, i) what areas or factors pre-occupied Nigerian newspapers editorials on national security? ii) what directions does the said editorials point to with regards to national security? And iii) what journalistic lens do the editorials lend themselves to in framing national security? In unravelling the above research puzzles, the study seeks to add to the contribution of media and journalism in the intersecting relationship with society in a democratic environment like Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CONTEXTUALIZING MEDIA AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

Scholarly debate about the impact of national security on media and journalistic system, though exist, but there seems to be detached approach on how they should both co-exist. For instance, Peri (2012) indicated that prolonged cases of conflicts, insecurity, wars, crises often create unusual national security culture that impact the media ecosystem. Though, the idea of national security has been approached from different dimensions, its relevance in the broader society takes pre-eminence from its wider scope in relationship to different other segments of society. Wolfers (1952) argued that ideation associated with national security is more ambiguous and vaguer but tied to several sections of the society within a nationalistic view. It is this diversifying way in which national security is aligned with society that also situates the media's interest in focusing on that aspect as well. In Nigeria, where insecurity has become one of the most critical issues in more than a decade now, the role of media both in terms of news coverage and editorial policies becomes an essential component of its influence in society.

In this context, the relationship between national security and media tends to be adversary in Nigeria (Ibrahim *et al* 2023), fostering a negative relationship (Moses *et al* 2022), contributing to the poor performance that the institutional role the media ought to play in shaping national security. This is likewise a global phenomenon, where since September 11th, protecting national security has been prioritized, while downplaying the importance of civil liberties like media freedom and a free press (McLeod & Shah 2015). Meyer (1995) further added that such dichotomy between national security and the media tend enact public discourse in related matters of security and conflict as struggle ground, projecting various cues particularly in news as well. In this case, breaching the gap between citizens' understanding of the workings of national security and what role the state plays in all of these becomes very critical. And since the media mirrors the society, issues of national security become sacrosanct to journalism and media industry, providing deeper knowledge of the issues at stake and linking the perception and public opinion of the citizenry to the state or national security experts and helmsmen. This task has become important given that in the postmillennial era, particularly in the context of defending national security from acts of terrorism and protecting civil liberties and democratic rights like free speech, freedom of expression and other media rights (Yusuf *et al* 2023; Douglas & Shaw 2015).

Understandably, this conflict of the state wanting to protect national security from too much exposure and at the same time adopting cautious steps in not wanting to breach democratic rights have been a primary focus of most scholarly research (Yusuf *et al* 2023; McLeod & Shaw 2015; Caparini 2007). Yet, the task of whether the media mirrors the views and opinions of the citizens on matters of national security has not been explored to a large degree. Thus, in an age of growing mediatization of society (Cervi *et al* 2022) and securitization of civil life in Nigeria (Njoku 2022; Okolie & Ugwueze 2015), media's contextualization of national security in Nigeria from the prism of citizens' opinions and perspective is critical to determining whether news editorial serves public interest and largely can be adduced to be public lens.

JOURNALISM, MEDIA FRAMING AND EDITORIALS

The critical role of editorial as a news genre has been studied across board and alongside its contributions in enriching or downplaying the public sphere (Le 2008; Gregory & Hutchins 2004). Yet, the mediated influence of editorials to society and the Habermasian public sphere (Habermas 1989) has to a large extent determine how impactful such a media organization is and the power it wields within society. Eisenegger and Schafer (2023) envisaged public sphere as mediated and communication open spaces where topical issues of common interest and public good are discussed, narrativized and mediatized in a journalistic manner. Being a more elevated genre of journalism and news media, editorials are often deployed to dissect salience issues about society in the public sphere.

In appraising the journalistic intersections between editorials and the public sphere, the central focus is what influence does society have on editorials and does the framing in editorials reflective of society's perception, public lens and expectations? A deeper contextualization of this journalistic task seeks to explain whether news media editorials are representative enough of society and thus deliver on the core mandate of watchdog journalism – checkmating the state and holding the government accountability to the people. In that light, there is a symbiotic relationship between editorial and the public sphere. The essence of this study is therefore aimed at exploring how editorials reflect the publics in the discourses and framing of Nigerian national security. More so, scholars like McNair (2018) harped on journalism as a modern public sphere where editorials are more of established pathways to contemporary public sphere.

Within that context, journalistic genres of which editorials featured as a projection of the public sphere can also provide a guide to the dictates of societal perception and understanding of national security issues, thereby, influencing the discursive and media logics capable of (re)shaping national security policies in very a broad manner. All these depend on the context, media ecosystem and political environment. In view of the Nigerian media ecosystem – which is pluralistic in nature (Akpojivi 2014; Olusola 2008), the impact of editorials has a corresponding impact in lieu of the receptiveness from both ends of the government and the governed. Hence, editorials are not just mediated perceptions and logics interacting with society, but also, intersects and projects the public sphere through several means and ways that both journalism and society engineer through rational communication within the public sphere (Habermas 1989). A lot of such editorial communication can be approach by exploring the framing patterns.

EDITORIAL FRAMING AND NATIONAL SECURITY: THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT

Editorial framing takes into account several factors and context relating to society, media ecology and logics in taking a stance on issues that are mediatized and narrativized within the broader public sphere. Hotchkiss (2010) while studying cross-national media framing of national security, argued that national cultural repertoires tend to determine how media frame

national security. They (editorials) often, are geared towards influencing policies, providing a directional guide on policy or issue. Squires (2011) further argued that editorials in the mainstream media largely are projectors and spaces for countering discourses. Sometimes, they could also act as enablers and enhancers of public discourse on politics, policies and debatable issues in the light of their journalistic, constitutional and democratic responsibility. The Nigerian 1999 Constitution bestowed the responsibility of holding the state and government accountable to the people on the media.

In section 22 of the 1999 Constitution, it observed that the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people. Further in section 39(1), the Constitution spells out clearly how every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference. In most cases as we shall see, most Nigerian newspapers editorials strive to fulfil that constitutional functionality to a large extent, in which, by applying the constitutional provision, democracy is likewise defined and upheld in various respects. Within the national security prism, what then can we say of Nigerian newspapers editorials framing?

Although, Ciboh (2017) submitted that Nigerian media framing of conflicts and insecurity, specifically, editorial framing of socio-political crises is influenced by media ownership, political partisanship, ethnicity and tribalism, geographical and religious affiliations, it is however exigent, to test what such editorial framing points squarely to. This has become urgent and relevant given that the same 1999 Constitution in Section 14(2) paragraph B though not justiciable also stipulates that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government. In all, editorial framing of whatever kind do not only fulfil the constitutional mediated responsibility in sections 22 and 39, but also is compel to put the government in check in view of this constitution role to the security of lives and property in Nigeria. Thus, how do we untie this knot in order to understand the editorial frames and what influence them and what do they stand to achieve?

METHODOLOGY

This study is set out to explore whether news editorials are reflective of citizens' perception on national security in Nigeria. To ascertain and interrogate this research puzzle, the article relied on Afro barometer's Survey on Nigerians perceptions on (national) security conducted in 2023. Afro barometer, a pan-African and non-partisan research organization, conducts research on democracy, economic, political and social issues within Africa, and it's a reliable polling agency for conducting research survey on attitudes in Africa, broadly. For research, the study focuses on Afro barometer's research on citizens' perception on security alongside twelve (12) editorials) in six (6) Nigerian newspapers. The newspapers selected represent mainstream media and the most authoritative media platforms in the country. They also have wider coverage across the 36 states of the federation, and also have wider audience and readership across the broad spectrum of the Nigerian society. Two articles have been selected from each of the newspapers for purposes of balancing. Articles have focused on news editorials dealing with national security as well. The Afro barometer's Survey helps us to understand citizens' perception; while the 12 editorials from Nigerian newspapers also written in 2023 seek to test whether such news editorials aligned with citizens' perceptions as documented in the Afro barometer's Survey. The study now proceeds to explore the Afro barometer survey and data.

EXPLORING AFROBAROMETER'S SURVEY ON PERCEPTION OF NIGERIANS ON SECURITY

In this survey, conducted between 2021 and 2022 and published in February, 2023, Afro barometer (2023) found an increase on citizens' concerns about insecurity and crime in Nigeria, where 1600 citizens surveyed ranked insecurity as the most important problem and critical challenge confronting the Nigerian state and government. The survey also indicates that 61% citizens felt unsafe and described the situation as a very serious problem for national security. The research conducted also show instances of 73% of citizens recorded public distrust deficit on security agencies like the Nigerian Police, contributing to 79% citizens rating government's performance on crime and security as *fairly bad* or *very bad*.

The survey also covered nearly all the areas of (in)security in the country including kidnapping, gang violence, drug and alcohol abuse, robbery, theft and break-ins. More so, the survey also recorded the crisis and challenges associated with citizens seeking for security assistance in cases where their security has been breached or compromised. Like which state institutions associated with maintaining security in the society like Police, local administration, or other institutions like tradition institutions, family, religious among do they approach for such security assistance. And such approach comes as a result of trust by citizens in such institutions as well.

The essence of focusing on this Afro barometer (2023) survey is to showcase the impulse of Nigerians on national security, their perceptions, views and opinions about the state and its role in national security. The focus of this study is to explore whether news editorials capture these citizens perceptions about national security in the framing of news editorials in their coverage of national security related matters. Thus, the study now looks at the newspapers' editorials framing of national security in Nigeria, with the desire to test whether there is correlation, departure or gaps in such editorial framing.

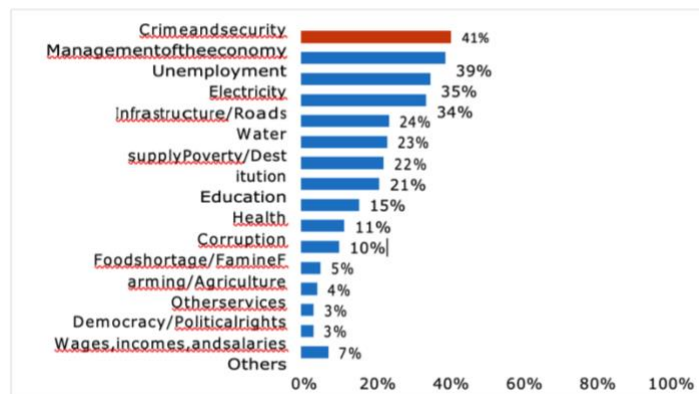


FIGURE 1. Most important problem | Nigeria | 2022.

Respondents were asked: In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Figure shows % of respondents who cited each issue as one of up to three important problems. Crime/security has climbed dramatically in importance, gaining 32 percentage points since 2017 (see Figure2).

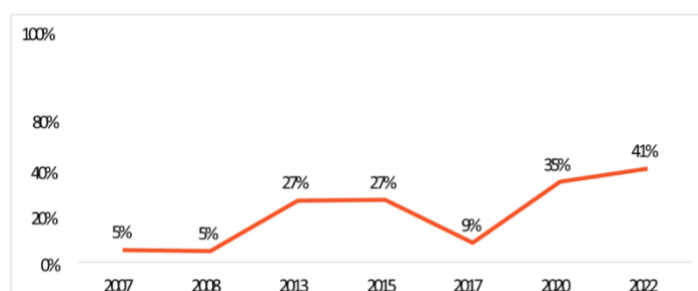


FIGURE 2. Crime and security as most important problem | Nigeria | 2007-2022

Respondents were asked: In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Figure shows % of respondents who cited crime and security as one of up to three important problems)

INSECURITY AND FEAR OF CRIME

In line with their concern about security, a growing proportion of Nigerians report feeling unsafe (Figure3). Six in 10 citizens (61%) say they felt unsafe walking in their neighborhoods “once or twice,” “several times,” “many times,” or “always” during the previous year, almost twice as many as reported this experience in 2017 (33%). More than half (51%) say they feared crime in their homes at least once during the past year, a 23-percentage-point jump from 2017 (28%).

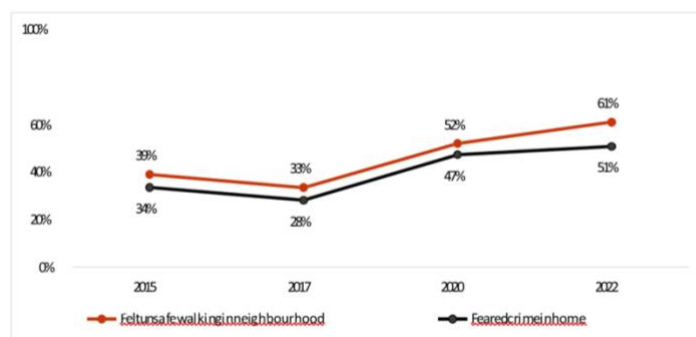


FIGURE 3. Sense of insecurity | Nigeria | 2015-2022

Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or any one in your family: Felt unsafe walking in your neighbourhood? Feared crime in your home? (% who say “just once or twice” “several times” “many times” or “always”)

TEXTUAL AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THREE NEWSPAPERS EDITORIAL FRAMING ON NIGERIA’S NATIONAL SECURITY

Here, the article explores three national newspapers (out of ten) – *The Guardian*, *The Punch and Vanguard Newspapers* editorial framing of the three and find out whether they aligned with public concerns on national security. First, each of the newspapers account for two (2) editorials published on different dates in 2023. What defined and shaped the editorials focus include the growing cases of insecurity mostly in Northern Nigeria caused by Boko Haram terrorism, banditry, Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP), ISIS among other criminal gangs. There is also the focus on appointment of security chiefs and the role and intent of the newly sworn-in government of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and what need to be done to tame escalating cases of insecurity in the country. Still, does these editorial framings reflect the concerns of the people in view of Nigeria’s national security? I now proceed to look at the various editorial framings of the three (3) newspapers.

The Guardian Newspapers: The Guardian is a national newspaper that was established in 1983 – forty years ago, with headquarters in Lagos. In this study, the newspaper’s editorial framing is understudied as well. In the two editorials selected, the first focused on the dissonance tones and worrisome breach of rights of the former Governor of

Central Bank of Nigeria, Godwin Emefiele by a security agency – the Department of State Services (DSS). Well, the newspaper editorial titled (i) ***Investigation of Godwin Emefiele: Matters Arising*** drew attention of the government to the rationale of security agencies in Nigeria abiding to their democratic mandates and boundaries, it came short of topicalizing and incentivising the crises of national security bedevilled by Boko Haram terrorism, banditry, killings, kidnappings and other forms of insecurity that have worsened Nigeria’s national security. The centre of power gravitas in the editorial was squarely on the erstwhile CBN Governor and the DSS. There was no editorial framing of issues that dwelt on the concerns of the public and citizens about national security, rather, elites power tussle. For (ii), ***National Security and Appointment of Service Chiefs*** highlighted the imperative of the new administration’s appoint of the new service chiefs, sort of the United States (US) equivalence of Joint Service Chiefs – that’s the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Chief of Army Staff (CAS), Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), Chief of Air Staff (CAS), Chief of Defence Intelligence, the Inspector General of Police among others. The thematic focus was on appointment of the service chiefs and the reorganization of the national security. And the primary concern was on national security personnel – hierarchy and the structure of national security itself. The editorial was not citizen-centric in a sense.

Vanguard Newspaper: The newspaper was also founded in 1983, also with its headquarters in Lagos. For this study, the article looks at the editorial (iii) ***What is Tinubu’s Security Strategy?*** The paper interrogated the new President Tinubu’s national security strategies by not only projecting the national security challenges confronting Nigeria, but also framing the editorial to be citizen-centric injecting the concerns of citizens, masses and Nigerians with regards to insecurity. These range from the *hopes of many concerned Nigerians, the public are yet to appraised the objectives* – of security policies of government. It also listed the cost of insecurity to Nigerians and citizens alike. The theme focuses on President’s Tinubu’s National Security Doctrine and Architecture. Also, (iv) ***Redefining our Security Threats*** emphasized the new government inaction on insecurity in the country, particularly failing to take proactive measures to tame the monster of insecurity in the country. Though, it raises the consciousness of insecurity and the plight of the masses caught up in the fire of criminality and insecurity, the editorial framing sort more to focus on the president and presidential power for national security decisions and policies.

Punch Newspaper: The newspaper was established in 1973 and it’s based in Lagos where operates across the country. For this study, (v) the editorial ***Crush Bandits, Don’t Grant Them Amnesty*** is framed on citizens’ concerns about granting amnesty to supposed repentant terrorists, bandits and militants. While the thematic focus of the editorial centred on citizens calls for punitive measures against perpetrators of criminality and insecurity, it portrayed citizens angst and called for government punitive actions against agents of criminality and insecurity. For (vi) ***Insecurity: Nigerians Await Relief from Service Chiefs***, the editorial relied on the appointment of the service chiefs to framed the citizens’ perception and expectations of national security and the administration. The editorial framed its thematic area to be the state of insecurity and what need to be done by government. It projected citizens concerns as well as prevention techniques to curb insecurity. In all, the editorial was citizen-centric, see Table below for further clarification.

S/No	Newspaper	Title of Editorial(s)	Date of Publication	Framing/Thematic Focus	Framing Agency Focus	Frequency of Appearance of Citizens/Public/Nigerians
i	The Guardian	<i>Investigation of Godwin Emefiele: Matters Arising</i>	3 rd July, 2023	Power Tussle and Security Agency (DSS) Breach of Rights	Ex-Governor of CBN & DSS	-
ii	The	<i>National</i>	5 th July,	Appointment of	National Security	6

	Guardian	<i>Security and Appointment of Service Chiefs</i>	2023	Service Chiefs and Reorganization of National Security	Personnel & Structure	
iii	Vanguard	<i>What is Tinubu's Security Strategy?</i>	10 th July, 2023	Interrogation of President National Security Doctrine & Architecture	President Tinubu	3
iv	Vanguard	<i>Redefining our Security Threats</i>	12 th July, 2023	Federal Government's Inaction on Insecurity	President Tinubu, Terrorists & Non-State Actors	-
v	The Punch	<i>Crush Bandits, Don't Grant Them Amnesty</i>	13 th July, 2023	Citizens' Call for Punitive Actions against Perpetuators of Criminality and Insecurity	Agents/Perpetuators of Crimes & Insecurity	-
vi	The Punch	<i>Insecurity: Nigerians Await Relief from Service Chiefs,</i>	19 th July, 2023	State of Insecurity in Nigeria and What Need to be Done	Citizens & Prevention Techniques	-

DISCUSSION: DOES NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS SUPPORT CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS / VIEWS AS PUBLIC LENS?

First, focusing on the two research collated for this study (i) Afro barometer's Survey on citizens views and perception on national security in Nigeria and (ii) six editorials of three newspapers – The Guardian, Vanguard and The Punch Newspapers, the article interrogates whether these news editorials mirrored public perceptions and concerns of citizens on (national) security. Do the newspaper editorials represent citizens views in the framing and is there a correlation between Afro barometer's Survey and the newspaper editorials framing on national security? Within the Afro barometer's Survey context, the article re-established the fact that 41% of Nigerians observed that crime and (in)security were the most important problem in Nigeria. This is followed by the fact that 73% of Nigerians have a high level of distrust on national security; while 79% rate the federal government's performance on security as *fairly bad* or *very bad*.

In the light of the above, and if it is to be stretched further that the Afro barometer's Survey clearly indicates the concerns of Nigerians on (in)security, it should be expected or assumed that six (6) different editorials of three (3) different national newspapers focusing on national security ordinarily should project these concerns and perceptions of the citizenry as stipulated above. However, this study finds not much of the editorials focused on the views of citizens except for *iii* and *vi* newspapers (*See Table 1 above*) that sparingly concentrated on highlighting the concerns of citizens. In fact, newspapers *vi* even from its caption illustrates the imperative of citizens concerns on national security. Again, though newspaper *ii* prioritized the concerns of citizens in its manner of editorial framing, its thematic concentration revolved around national security and appointment of service chiefs. Yet, these cases (editorials) were not holistic in the framing of citizens' views and perceptions on national security.

Further, the editorials framing was centered on power system, structure and configuration of the various national security architecture of the country. Coming at a time a new government has just been inaugurated, it is understandable why the newspaper editorials rallied round more on the systemic and structural reorganization of Nigeria's national security. Still, the under representation of public views on national security goes a long way

to explain how media coverage of salient national issues not be citizen-centric, given the over concentration of media platforms on elites' perception than mass publics views on such critical issues. That the editorials also failed to aligned or correspond with the Afro barometer's Survey where about 79% of citizens feel government was not properly the precarious levels of insecurity and crime indicate more about the gap between media organizations' editorial policies and reality on ground as represented by views and perceptions of citizens. This gap between editorial contents and citizens views, or the understanding of editorials as the projection of public sphere as Squires (2011) observed.

CONCLUSION

This study interrogates the question of whether news media are reflective of the public concerns and views on national security issues in Nigeria. It's significant in the sense that national security is a critically important matter for both government and the general public. The study used frame analysis to examine the framing of national security issues in the editorials of some selected Nigerian newspapers. In view of the precarity of insecurity and mounting challenges of Nigeria's national security, it is pertinent to unravel what constantly preoccupies media establishment, mostly, their editorial contents. And what trajectory and path do they tilt towards in the broader mediatization of the nation's national issues occasioned by terrorism, militancy, banditry, kidnapping and other crimes.

Critically, the study shows the manner with which news editorials get caught up with power games and the ensuing hierarches of the national security elites. Given that the media are spaces for the projection of public discourse and citizens are central to discourses, the absence or isolation of citizens from such discourses and narratives demonstrate the disconnect in the media spaces. Thus, while this study cannot be said to be one-stop shop in determining whether the media is citizen-centric or not, it provides a clue about how news editorials showcase and pander to hierarchal power within Nigeria's national security architecture. Further studies can explore other salient gaps in arriving at the level at which media digress from its core mandate of projecting perception and views of the public sphere. Yet, the study contributes to the literature and media discourse around national security in Nigeria.

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